

By Steve King

Until last fall, most Americans had never heard of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, more commonly known as ACORN. This relatively obscure community organizing group emerged on the national scene in 2008 after producing more than 400,000 false or fraudulent voter registrations during the 2008 election cycle.

Aside from being in the business of electing liberals, ACORN's stated objective is to advocate for traditionally liberal policies of behalf of low and moderate income families. However, a deeper investigation into ACORN and its approximately 300 corporate affiliates reveals a complex organizational and financial spiderweb that functions both as a criminal enterprise and a self-contained economy.

ACORN has corroded the integrity of our electoral process by attacking the integrity of the ballot box. It is a crime to produce fraudulent registration forms and in many states, it is against the law to hire people and pay them commission to go out and gather voter registrations.

Yet ACORN is currently under investigation in 14 states for voter fraud and has frequently paid employees on a commission basis to register voters. ACORN was charged with voter fraud in Nevada.

According to an October 2008 article in The Economist, during the last election cycle, "in Orlando, home to the Magic Kingdom of Disney, Mickey Mouse tried to register. In Indiana there was an application from a sandwich shop called Jimmy Johns. Authorities in Nevada were surprised to receive voter registration forms from the starting line-up of the Dallas Cowboys." All of these fraudulent voter registrations were later traced back to ACORN.

Any reasonable person would conclude that false voter registration almost inevitably lead to fraudulent voting, a felony charge. Because voter fraud is a crime nearly impossible to investigate and prosecute, there is no telling how many fraudulent votes have been cast across America because of ACORN's illegal activities.

ACORN's fraudulent voter registration drives may have been funded with taxpayer dollars. To date, ACORN and its business units have received more than \$53 million in federal tax dollars via Nancy Pelosi, Barney Frank and ACORN's other friends in Congress. Recent stimulus legislation could give the organization access to up \$8.5 billion in additional funding. The interlocking web of financial connections between ACORN and its affiliate organizations are rife with waste, fraud and abuse, yet have never been investigated because ACORN has been protected by cronies in Congress.

The White House also has deep ties to ACORN. President Barack Obama represented ACORN as an attorney in a voter registration case, and Obama forged his political reputation while leading a get-out-the-vote effort known as Project Vote, a subsidiary of ACORN.

ACORN also played a significant role in the mortgage meltdown by pressuring banks to make bad loans, by facilitating them and by lobbying Congress to lower the standards required by Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. ACORN and many of its affiliates co-mingle funds and use the same accounting firm and same mailing address in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Individually, each of these factors is troubling, but added together, the facts surrounding ACORN warrant quick and decisive action. I believe an all-out, full court press federal investigation is the only way to bring ACORN to heel.

The Department of Justice and the Internal Revenue Service need to jointly investigate ACORN and perform a complete forensic analysis of the activities and finances of ACORN and its affiliates. Multiple congressional committee

investigations need to occur to ensure this partisan criminal enterprise will not continue its shady practices while collecting taxpayer funds. People need to go to jail for their criminal activities.

Legislative action also needs to be taken to ensure ACORN will not receive any more of your taxpayer dollars. On September 17, the House, by 345-75 margin, passed an amendment blocking federal funding for ACORN. This vote sent a loud and clear message that no more taxpayer dollars should be given to ACORN, and I will be working with the Senate to try and get this ban enacted into law.

Taxpayers do not want their hard-earned money placed in the coffers of this partisan criminal enterprise. It is time for ACORN to crack and end its fraudulent operations.